

Seventh Sunday after Trinity – July 19th, 2026
Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church, Block, Kansas
Rev. Joshua Woelmer

Text: Mark 8:1–9

“God’s Care of Body and Soul”

Theme: God has created both body and soul, and He also provides for both.

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Intro: One remarkable thing about Christianity that we often take for granted is that we believe that God cares for both soul *and* body, and that he created us to be both body and soul together. I say that we take this for granted, because there are other belief systems out there that skew way too far to one extreme or the other. Some care way too much about the body, and some care way too much about the soul. Martin Luther has a wonderful quote about extremes and how people sometimes bounce from one extreme to another: “The world is like a drunken peasant. If one helps him into the saddle on one side, he will fall off on the other side.”¹ I’ve used this image before when talking about legalism versus antinomianism: someone who’s gotten burned by a lot of rules sometimes falls off in the opposite direction by living without rules. Or vice versa: someone who didn’t grow up with a lot of rules recognizes that living by rules helps structure your life, so they become legalists, thinking that life is all about rules. Well, there’s something similar in our world about despising either body or soul. The Christian answer is that God has created both body and soul, and He also provides for both.

I. Denial of the Soul: Atheism

A. One tendency that is common in our society is to deny the existence of the soul.

1. The form this takes is atheism. After all, if someone denies the existence of God, then they also deny the existence of anything spiritual.
2. It’s not like atheists deny just the Christian God and opt for worshipping Zeus or Odin or Ra.
3. True, some say they are, but they’re just being fake. No one is actually bringing back the worship of pagan gods as the pagans would recognize it.
4. What is way more common is the argument that we are just descended from animals, and that nothing differentiates us from them except perhaps our reason.
5. This leads to two conclusions: first, that Man is not special in this world, and second, that every form of life is equal in value to us.
6. Under this view, there is no sanctity of human life: in this view, we are just a collection of physical materials with nothing eternal.
7. This has a lot of knock-on effects.
8. There is no reason why our species should continue to exist. Some have suggested that it is better for us to die off and return the world to a human-less nature.

¹ LW 54:111.

9. This also leads to ideological veganism—not for possible health benefits, but because animals are seen as equals to humans and deserve to live as well.
 10. This also leads to communism, which is overtly atheistic.
 11. The list of effects of atheism and materialism is long.
- B. Many people don't go as far as atheists and deny the soul entirely, but many people simply don't care about their soul.
1. They may be agnostics, not sure about whether there is a God or not.
 2. They may simply be "secular"—caring only about this life and what they can get out of it.
 3. The pleasures of this life are many, and they serve to distract many people.
- C. The danger for Christians is that we listen to this siren song to make this life all there is.
1. We ought to recognize this temptation to make the pleasures of the body all there is.
 2. What we do with our body affects our soul.
 3. How we treat other people's bodies affects their souls.
 4. We are created with incredible unity of these two.

II. Denial of the Body: Spiritualism

- A. The entirely opposite error to atheism and materialism is radical spiritualism.
1. This is typified by Eastern religions, especially Buddhism and Hinduism, that teach that this physical world is an illusion.
 2. They have their differences, but they generally teach that this world is a web of deception that distracts our senses and desires.
 3. Salvation comes by detaching ourselves from these false appearances, going deep into ourselves by meditation to attain pure consciousness.
 4. Eventually through sufficient meditation, we could gain pure enlightenment.
 5. The hope is to escape rebirth in this world and be dissolved into a cosmic unity with everything else.
 6. These beliefs teach that suffering is only an illusion that demonstrates your connection to this world.
- B. This belief occurred briefly in Christianity through a heresy called "Gnosticism" that posited secret knowledge of the spiritual realms.
1. Gnosticism taught that the world was created by the mistake of a demon who trapped spiritual sparks inside physical bodies.
 2. It suggests that we were not meant to live in these bodies, but we need to escape them to achieve a higher spirituality.
- C. Where do we see this today?
1. We see it in people who seek deeply after spirituality and despise the physical.
 2. We see it in people who want to achieve an intensely pleasurable experience and call it a "spiritual high."
 3. We see it when people want to commune with God but not through physical means.
 4. Perhaps we are tempted to think that spirituality happens only when we are in church or on a mission trip or doing so-called "spiritual" things.

III. Christianity: Body and Soul

A. The message of Christianity is that God has united body and soul.

1. He has created both earth and heaven, and He rules over both.
2. Genesis 2 is clear: **“the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature”** (7).
3. Adam was formed from dirt. He was not a pure spiritual being.
4. Adam also had a soul, breathed into him by God.
5. Adam was a creature, but he also had a soul that enlivened him.
6. The same is true of Christ, on a far more magnificent scale.
7. Jesus was true God and true man.
8. God valued this world and our flesh so highly that he sought to redeem it.
9. He became a part of His own creation in the person of Jesus.
10. Jesus did not forsake suffering in order to be an Eastern mystic guru.
11. Jesus set his face towards suffering. He embraced it.
12. He suffered both the worst that this world could offer through flogging and crucifixion, and He also suffered the wrath of His Father for our sins.
13. Salvation does not come by escaping suffering but going through suffering and even death to a glorious resurrection.
14. That was true of Jesus, and it’s true of us.

B. Jesus also teaches us that He continues to care for our body and soul.

1. The Feeding of the 4000 is a remarkable story.
2. It’s different from the Feeding of the 5000—by more than just numbers.
3. These people went out into a wilderness on the opposite side of the Jordan to listen to Jesus, rather than being seated on green grass in the Galilean countryside.
4. They had come from far away rather than from nearby towns.
5. They stayed for three days. Those at the Feeding of the 5000 only spent an afternoon with Jesus.
6. They were hungry—for the Word of God.
7. Yes, they became physically hungry too, as Jesus Himself notes.
8. But Jesus chose to feed both needs. He fed their souls with His Word, and He fed their bodies with bread and fish.
9. And there was plenty to spare.

C. Jesus feeds you too.

1. He feeds you His Word through the proclamation of His Word and through the bread and wine that are given in the Sacrament.
2. He knows that you are empty because of your sin, and He fills your soul with what is needful.
3. He also cares for your body.
4. God uses many people to provide food and clothing for you.
5. Even when people are desperately poor, He gives us a spirit of generosity to help them in a time of need.
6. Jesus is bountiful.

Conclusion: So, we ought not deny God’s care for body or soul. Atheism and mysticism are two sides of a horse, and people sometimes fall off one side and then the other. Christianity teaches

us to ride on the horse—to understand God’s creation of us and of this world. He created everything perfectly, and even though sin has corrupted much, nonetheless we dare not despise one or the other. Rather, God works through suffering. He works through this world, even through simple means, to save us. For salvation is found in Jesus, who is God and man—heaven and earth perfectly united.

Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Continue with Nicene Creed.

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